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DISFIGURING MONUMENTS: HISTORY IN PAUL DE MAN'S "SHELLEY DISFIGURED" AND PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY'S "THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE"

BY ORRIN N. C. WANG

"Whence I came, partly I seem to know,
"And how & by what paths I have been brought
To this dread pass, methinks even thou mayst guess;
Why this should be my mind can compass not;
"Whither the conqueror hurries me still less."
—Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Triumph of Life"

What does it mean to "historicize" Paul de Man today? Given the recent revelations about his wartime past in Nazi-occupied Belgium, both this project of "historicization" and its attendant question of "politicization" inevitably gravitate toward that wartime past and its relation to de Man as the foremost practitioner of deconstruction in the American academy in the last three decades. While not denying the importance—indeed, the necessity—of the scholarship being done on de Man and his work for the collaborationist Belgium newspaper *Le Soir*, I want to argue against one assumption about the methodology implicitly tempting such scholarship, that of allowing *one* set of historical conditions to determine deconstruction's political identity and to explain deconstruction's reception of all texts. To begin to historicize de Man, I would argue, is to consider a *host* of sociohistoric nodal points that coordinate the production of de Man's critical texts as the reception of other texts engaged in a similar task of cultural (re)production and reception. Such a project must also observe the way in which history itself is constituted in its interrogation by both de Man's critical text and the text de Man critically reads. To "historicize" de Man, then, is to mandate the necessity of a critical dimension that foregrounds history as the critical problem history itself is trying to understand.

I thus turn to de Man's perhaps most violent statement on the unreadability of history, "Shelley Disfigured," and, more important, to the text in which de Man reads this unreadability, Percy Bysshe Shelley's "The Triumph of Life."[1] My purpose is to claim a

dialectical engagement between these two texts that will show how de Man recovers from Shelley's poem its radical, epistemological skepticism, but elides the reason for that skepticism, the role of "The Triumph of Life" as a deconstructive critique of history and revolutionary transformation, a critique that in fact comments upon the uncertainty of deconstruction's present political role. In doing so, I also hope to show that we are in fact dealing with not only two, but a number of other texts, released, as it were, through Shelley's complicated use of classical and post-French Revolutionary imagery (his use, I will argue, of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Edmund Burke, Napoleon Bonaparte, and of the procession/triumph itself), and his poem's anticipation of the political problem of revolutionary identity that Karl Marx will address some thirty years later in *The Eighteenth Brumaire.*

I turn first to de Man's 1979 essay "Shelley Disfigured," a sustained attack upon historical thought by and large underwritten, for de Man, by a language of historical reconstruction, by a faith in the restoration of past monuments presumably disfigured and fragmented only by the inevitable assaults of time. As de Man notes, "The Triumph of Life" has been an exemplary object of inquiry for such historical reconstruction. The poem is literally a fragment, an unfinished work cut off by the accidental death of Shelley in 1822. Its unfinished nature pertains not only to the absence of an ending, but also to its status as a collection of rough manuscripts with a number of questionable lines, even in the final version approved and published by Mary Shelley.[2] The poem is also fragmentary in the sense that it is strewn with the "fragments" of a biblical, classical, and Renaissance past, numerous allusions, as Harold Bloom has pointed out, to Petrarch, Dante, and the Bible. Further, as Kenneth Neill Cameron notes, the Petrarchan allusions imply that a completed "Triumph" would still be a fragment, comparable to one of the six poems in Petrarch's own *Triumphs*, in which each poem dramatizes one aspect of existence triumphing over another.[3] In all these ways "The Triumph of Life" invites its reader to approach it as a collection of historical and textual fragments waiting to be constructed by a historical and philological effort.

The poem also invites us to see this historical effort as essential to understanding the poem's meaning, so that to reconstruct Shelley's work is also to interpret it. Aside from the poem's textual history, this is no mean feat. "The Triumph of Life" is difficult to read, given the tropological web of extended metaphors and epic

similes that Shelley uses to describe the work's narrative action. This problem of interpretation is not only a formal but also a thematic obsession: Shelley punctuates his narrative with a series of questions commenting on the poem's unfolding action, questions that are ultimately left unanswered by the fragmentary nature of the work. The last question, "Then, what is Life?" is followed by several lines with the last cut off in midsentence. Before de Man, one historically reconstructed "The Triumph of Life" by coming to terms with the unanswered question left hanging at the end of the fragment. By speculating how Shelley would have answered that question, one "completed" the poem, and answered the emendatory *and* interpretive questions that haunt many of the poem's lines. To read "The Triumph of Life" critically was to be caught up in a hermeneutic that was at once literary, imaginative, historical, and philological; to unlock its code was to secure simultaneously the poem's true meaning and its true historical place.[4]

De Man begins "Shelley Disfigured" by teasing out the implications of these critical assumptions about "The Triumph of Life":

> Like several of the English romantics' major works, *The Triumph of Life*, Shelley's last poem, is, as is well known, a fragment that has been unearthed, edited, reconstructed and much discussed. All this archeological labor can be considered a response to the questions that articulate one of the text's main structures. . . . These questions can easily be referred back to the enigmatic text they punctuate and they are characteristic of the interpretive labor associated with romanticism. In the case of this movement, they acquire an edge of urgency which is often lacking when they are addressed to earlier periods, except when these are themselves mediated by the neo-hellenism, the neo-medievalism or the neo-baroque of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. This is not surprising, since they are precisely the archeological questions that prompt us to deduce the present from the identification of the more or less immediately anterior past, as well as from the process that leads from then to now. ("SD," 39–40)

The question of periodization, de Man suggests, takes on a special significance when we apply it to Romanticism. "The late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century" compose our "more or less immediately anterior past"; by identifying that period as Romanticism and then saying what that Romanticism is, we say what our past was and thus what our present is, and thereby secure our Anglo-European history. By piecing such fragments as "The Tri-

umph of Life" together, we historically reconstruct Romanticism; through such a reconstruction we define Romanticism, name our own relation to that period, and gain access to our own historical narrative. Romanticism itself becomes a fragment of a larger whole, our own history. Or does it? Unsurprisingly, de Man believes a definition of Romanticism is more slippery than what one might think:

> What is the meaning of *The Triumph of Life*, of Shelley and of romanticism?. . . [The archeological questions we ask of Shelley, his poem, and Romanticism] allow one to conclude that *The Triumph of Life* is a fragment of something whole, or a moment, in a process that now includes us within its horizon. What relationship do we have to such a text that allows us to call it a fragment that we are then entitled to reconstruct, to identify and implicitly to complete? This supposes, among other things, that Shelley or romanticism are themselves entities, which, like a statue, can be broken into pieces, mutilated, or allegorized . . . after having been stiffened, frozen, erected or whatever one wants to call the particular rigidity of statues. Is the status of a text line the status of a statue? ("SD," 40–41)

For de Man, the status of a text line is the status of a statue in that the line, like the statue, invites the archeological effort of reconstruction as interpretation. But more important for de Man, the status of a statue *is* the status of a text line in that the historical statue continually opens itself to the linguistic process of disfigurement and mutilation that defines de Man's vision of how a text works.

Thus de Man uses the "questions of origin, of direction and identity" that punctuate Shelley's text to show how "The Triumph of Life" makes itself unreadable and, in effect, history impossible. The continual imposition upon and erasure of one question by another dispel "any illusion of dialectical progress or regress" ("SD," 44). Furthermore, the imagery and syntax surrounding those questions are "tangles of meaning and of figuration" which "tie themselves into a knot which arrests the process of understanding" ("SD," 44). The linguistic tools with which we might reconstruct "The Triumph of Life" are themselves discontinuous, ruptured and unreliable—or, as de Man calls them, "disfigured." For de Man, the character in "The Triumph of Life" who links language and the concept of disfigurement together is Rousseau.

De Man defines disfigurement by analyzing Rousseau's first appearance in the poem:

> What I thought was an old root which grew
> To strange distortion out of the hill side . . .
> . . . . . .
> And . . . the grass which methought hung so wide
> And white, was but his thin discoloured hair,
> And . . . the holes it vainly sought to hide
> Were or had been eyes.
>
> ("TL," 182–88)

De Man reads disfigurement into these lines by arguing that they describe a reverse prosopopoeia, a loss of face: "The erasure or effacement is indeed the loss of a face, in French *figure*. Rousseau no longer, or hardly . . . has a face. Like the protagonist in the Hardy story, he is disfigured, *défiguré*, defaced" ("SD," 46).[5] By bringing in the French *figure*, de Man links Rousseau with language—the question of figure—and names the main action of that language as disfigurement, the effacement/erasure of meaning de Man sees "The Triumph of Life" enacting, and which first occurs with the imposition of one question upon another. For de Man, Rousseau's "defacement" occurs when Rousseau's mind is figuratively "effaced" after he drinks from the shape's cup. Just as the replacement of one question by another constitutes "a self-receding scene" that confutes rather than encourages historical narration, so too does the imprinting of "a new Vision" ("TL," 411) upon Rousseau's mind also mark Rousseau's metamorphosis—"My brain became as sand" ("TL," 405)—as the loss, instead of gain, of cognition.[6]

For de Man, other parts of Rousseau's tale also demonstrate this loss. De Man argues, for example, that since the language describing Rousseau's first waking moments is unstable, Rousseau awakens into a state of "glimmering" uncertainty—of a "forgetting" so radical "that we have no assurance whatever that the forgotten ever existed" ("SD," 50). Likewise, the reflective interplay of light among sun, stream, well and shape in Rousseau's tale contains paradoxical examples of "self-contained specularity" that refute stable, self-referential, and originary meaning ("SD," 55–57). The locus of this "violent . . . light" ("SD," 64) is the "shape all light" ("TL," 352) gliding above the stream, whose very "figure" for de Man depends upon the impossible suspension of language's disfig-

uring force. For de Man, that force is first and foremost what he calls language's arbitrary, performative power, language's ability to "posit" itself without justifying why or how it occurs.[7] This meaningless power is the payoff of de Man's essay, the cause for the shape's disfigurement, which is *not* the cause, in any linear sense, since de Man's main example of this assertive power is the imposition of the sun at the beginning of the poem, an event temporally disconnected from the events that make up the meeting between Rousseau and the shape:

> The positing power of language is both entirely arbitrary, in having a strength that cannot be reduced to necessity, and entirely inexorable in that there is no alternative to it. It stands beyond the polarities of chance and determination and can therefore not be part of a temporal sequence of events. The sequence has to be punctured by acts that cannot be made a part of it. It cannot begin . . . by telling us of the waning of the stars under the growing impact of the sun, a natural motion which is the outcome of a mediation, but it must evoke the violent "springing forth" of a sun detached from all antecedents. . . . The most continuous and gradual event in nature, the subtle gradations of the dawn, is collapsed into the brusk swiftness of a single moment:
>
> Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
> . . . the Sun sprang forth
> . . . and the mask
>
> Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth.
>
> ("TL," 1–4; "SD," 62–63)

For de Man, the "positing power of language" turns history into an endless, linguistic act of "inscription" in which events are textual marks that simultaneously impose upon and erase one another ("SD," 62). Because of this linguistic act, neither monument nor event can stay true to itself; both enact what Jerome Christensen has called, in reference to de Man, a critical apostasy that subverts our attempt to reconstruct the monument and make sense of the event.[8]

It is here that I want to intervene in "Shelley Disfigured" and to interrogate more fully de Man's own representation of how disfigurement and monumentalization relate. Crucial to this representation are the two contradictory ways in which language's "positing power" disfigures the "shape all light." The first way is disfiguration as a reverse prosopopoeia, the loss of face and body, the decomposition of the shape:

"The fair shape waned in the coming light
As veil by veil the silent splendour drops
From Lucifer, amid the chrysolite
"Of sunrise ere it strikes the mountain tops."

("TL," 412–15)

De Man sees "Lucifer" as "metaphor, the bearer of light which carries light of the senses and of cognition from events and entities to their meaning" ("SD," 66). Whether we make this interpretive leap with de Man or not, "Lucifer" and "the fair shape" do lose "the contour of [their] own face or shape" ("SD," 66). Here disfiguration is an erasure of body that is then teased out to also mean a dissolution of shape. The gesture is the exact opposite of being "stiffened, frozen, erected or whatever one wants to call the particular rigidity of statues." The fair shape's and Lucifer's dissolution link the loss of this rigidity to the disfigurement of history. Language disfigures history by revealing the insubstantiality of the historical monuments we reconstruct.

But this dissolution is accompanied by an opposite gesture. According to de Man, the shape quite literally sinks from the weight of language's positing power, so "that, when we again meet the shape . . . it is no longer gliding along the river but drowned, Ophelia-like, below the surface of the water" ("SD," 58). Likewise, the rainbow which the shape first wears as a "many coloured scarf" returns, "in [Rousseau's] ensuing vision, as a rigid, stony arch said 'fiercely [to extol] the fortune' of the shape's defeat by what the poem calls 'life' " ("SD," 58).[9] Unlike the waning shape and Lucifer, the rainbow and the weighed-down shape meet a stone-like fate, where they harden and attain the density and "particular rigidity of statues."

This movement is also disfigurement, a reverse prosopopoeia, since that trope is the giving not only of a face, but also a body. To turn to stone is to lose one's flesh, and thus one's body. In the shape's case, its watery fate reveals that personification is always already disfigurement, in that the given body is always false, an inanimate simulacrum that can only stiffen, harden and sink. Likewise, the rainbow, what de Man interprets as the organic unification of the linguistic and phenomenal worlds, is also a false body, a truth claim that exists only as a reified monument, a stone arch. The only "real" body discussed in "Shelley Disfigured" fares no better.

Like the shape and the rainbow, Shelley's own drowned and disfigured body stiffens into a statue, this time because of the various interpretive and reconstructive pressures we have placed on "The Triumph of Life" and other Romantic texts:

> For what we have done with the dead Shelley, and with all the other dead bodies that appear in romantic literature . . . is simply to bury them in their own texts made into epitaphs and graves. They have been made statues for the benefit of future archeologists "digging in the grounds for the new foundations" of their own monuments. They have been transformed into historical and aesthetic objects. ("SD," 67)

Whereas Jerome McGann urges us in *The Romantic Ideology* to reach for Shelley's unburnt heart, de Man tells us any such attempt is a reconstruction of Shelley's body, which is the greatest disfigurement of all.[10] Yet de Man's insight cannot stop this transformation:

> [This monumentalization] is not avoidable, since the failure to exorcise the threat, even in the face of such evidence as the radical blockage that befalls this poem, becomes precisely the challenge to understanding that always again demands to be read. . . . No degree of knowledge can ever stop this madness, for it is the madness of words. ("SD," 68)

The "madness of words," the critical apostasy of de Man's own essay, is what ensures monumentalization in the first place. Thus "Shelley Disfigured" deconstructs its own assault against history, in that de Man describes for us a historical monumentalization which is a mystified state that the "madness of words" exposes and undoes, but also *guarantees*. For de Man, of course, this guarantee is worthless, in that it only underscores the inevitability of the process of simultaneous monumentalization and disfigurement he identifies. But this is precisely where I want to recognize a dialectical engagement between "Shelley Disfigured" and "The Triumph of Life." Shelley's poem, I would argue, is as obsessed with the question of monumentalization and its inevitability as de Man's essay. For "The Triumph of Life," however, this guarantee of monumentalization is the occasion for a tortured interrogation of the *specificity* of monuments, of what they replace, and of the politics of that replacement—of, in other words, what it means to read history.

Thus, the apparent discontinuity among the questions already upon the poem's surface, those of time, direction and identity,

prove for de Man the continuous imposition and erasure occurring within the poem. But de Man assumes that the only other choice for the poem besides imposition/erasure is a genetic model whereby the poem's questions propel it forward toward the possession of an ultimate answer. But what if the poem is not concerned with coming up with the right answer, and is instead caught up with the impossibility of asking the right question? "The Triumph of Life" then works as an aphasia, whereby its technical and poetic virtuosity overcompensate for a conceptual stutter of which the poem is intensely aware; each question asks what it cannot hope to imagine, but what nevertheless "glimmers" before us through the accretion of the questions' vocabulary and concerns. De Man's drama of imposition/erasure only signifies the rupture of the poem's horizontal movement, whereas the poem is actually occupied with its vertical effect, the accretion of questions about Life, chariot, and Rousseau that will formalize something close to the subject of its interrogation.

Standing in most obviously for that subject is Rousseau. The poet in fact asks, "Then, what is Life?" after listening to Rousseau's tale of the "shape all light," which is meant to answer the poet's questions about Rousseau. And, regardless of de Man's assertion that "The Triumph of Life" thwarts its own hermeneutic impulse, "Shelley Disfigured" tells us that Rousseau is disfigurement incarnate. The knowledge of Rousseau's inevitable disfigurement goes back to de Man's 1971 essay, "The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau," where Rousseau's texts are "literary" because they know they will be misread:

> [While Rousseau's text] accounts for its own mode of writing, it states at the same time the necessity of making this statement itself in an indirect, figural way that knows it will be misunderstood by being taken literally. Accounting for the "rhetoricity" of its own mode, the text also postulates the necessity of its own misreading. It knows and asserts it will be misunderstood.[11]

At the end of "Shelley Disfigured" de Man resists making his reading a method, and the disfigured Rousseau a monument. But this gesture is disingenuous in that the disfigurement of Rousseau is *already* a monumentalized discourse from the outset of Shelley's poem, a discourse, moreover, that Shelley inherits from Rousseau. The "misreading" and subsequent defacement of Rousseau as a private and public figure is a major theme of all of Rousseau's

autobiographical works. (De Man actually acknowledges this historical fact, but only to support—and thus have it circumscribed by—his linguistic argument.)[12] In the *Confessions* the threat of persecution and conspiracy plots aimed at Rousseau haunt part 2, especially after his expulsion from the Hermitage in book 9. The *Dialogues* or *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques* is even more intensely aware of Rousseau as a cultural monument open to defacement and misinterpretation. As Peter France relates, "The two protagonists are 'Rousseau' and 'the Frenchman': the subject of their conversation is 'Jean-Jacques,' the strange and apparently monstrous author known to the public at large."[13] "Rousseau" defends "Jean-Jacques," just as in the *Confessions* Rousseau defends himself against the accusations of his real and imagined enemies. By his last autobiographical work, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, which Shelley read in 1815, Rousseau does not even attempt to rectify his public defamation; with "the desire to be better understood by men . . . extinguished in my heart," he accepts his disfigurement as his historical fate: "Very few days pass without reflections confirming how greatly mistaken I was to count on winning back the public even in another age, since with respect to me it is led by guides who are continually renewed in the groups that have taken a dislike to me. . . . Everything is finished for me on earth."[14]

Entwined with these examples of paranoia and persecution is a powerful narcissism, an unshakable belief in the scenario that "Jean-Jacques" *is* a cultural monument at the center of the Western world. This egoism has become a cultural monument of its own, another statue that describes Rousseau and the era he inhabited. The most famous twentieth-century version of this statue is Irving Babbitt's *Rousseau and Romanticism*, which defines Romanticism as the deluded egoism of Rousseau.[15] Thus, contrary to de Man, Rousseau is actually the site from which historical statuary springs. From Rousseau comes a monumentalized discourse of Romantic egoism that Babbitt castigates, and an equally monumentalized discourse of persecution that de Man exploits. Most important, from Rousseau's awareness of himself as "Jean-Jacques" comes a monumentalized discourse *on* monumentalization, on using a figure or statue to describe and evaluate a certain time or event. In that sense, Babbitt's and de Man's use of Rousseau is explicitly Romantic. The period between Rousseau's and Shelley's deaths is marked by attempts to periodize that era by defining the inheritance "of what was once Rousseau" ("TL," 204), by saying what statue he

actually is. The question "The Triumph of Life" tries to ask is caught up with questions about Rousseau, because who he was *was* the question people asked in order to interrogate the era they inhabited. The strategy is so conventional that it makes Shelley's interrogation of Rousseau an inquiry into the historically conventional: into how we make statues, and what we do with them.

The event most entwined with the identity of Rousseau is of course the French Revolution. When one asked someone at the end of the eighteenth century who Rousseau was, one was asking that person what he or she thought of the massive changes European society had undergone, and was still experiencing. As Edward Duffy puts it, "blamed or praised for the course of modern history, Rousseau became a touchstone of allegiance in world politics."[16] The French Assembly first participated in this ideological monument-making, when in 1790 they unanimously passed a proposal to erect a statue of Rousseau with the inscription, "LA NATION FRANÇAISE LIBRE A J.-J. ROUSSEAU." In 1794 the French Assembly then installed Rousseau's ashes in the Pantheon of the Revolution's heroes, making Rousseau an institutionalized figure for the Assembly's own ideological and educational schemes.[17]

To disfigure such a figure was then an explicitly political act aimed at France's new political institutions. Counterrevolutionaries took this act up with gusto, turning Rousseau into a monument of all the French Revolution's follies. English reactionaries characterized this Rousseau in two ways. First, Rousseau's early affiliation with Enlightenment figures was conflated with his role as "natural" man and social scientist. Out of this mix came an Enlightenment philosophe whose views on government, education, and Nature were embedded in architectonic systems of logic and reason. But this philosophe was characterized in another way, wherein his belief in reason and clarity hid and was motivated by an overwhelming vanity and salaciousness, traits first demonstrated by Rousseau's posthumous *Confessions*. Thus the philosophe's reason was a logic that gave way to madness, and which explained all the excesses of the French Revolution.[18] Rousseau became the target of an anti-Jacobinist iconoclasm, which took him as an example of the false clarity and idolatry which led to the chaos that engulfed France.

That Shelley is aware of Rousseau's many roles is made clear by his poet's first encounter with Rousseau as a wizened old root. As we earlier noted, de Man uses the French *défiguré* to turn Rous-

seau's loss of face into a sign of linguistic disfigurement. But in doing so de Man elides the specific terms of diastrophism Shelley uses to describe Rousseau, which more readily signal the various statues Rousseau becomes. For as an "old root" this image of Rousseau already contains the hardness and rigidity of a monument. More important, the image also *specifies* what monuments Rousseau becomes. As a root he is both Nature child and priapic figure; as a root twisted into a "strange distortion" with grass that is really "discoloured hair," he is also a parody of Nature and the priapic. "Strange distortion" refers to both the publicly misunderstood figure and the perverse philosophe, "one of that deluded crew" ("TL," 184) taken in by the false clarity of the Enlightenment. The absence of Rousseau's eyes further mocks the Enlightenment and French Revolutionary claims of a clear, visible system of truth. And, finally, as a root he is the Latin *radix*, the radical all Europe and England knew. Political radical, nature child, parody of the nature child, monstrous phallus, misunderstood public figure and Enlightenment dupe—these are *all* various statues of Rousseau from the various ideological camps that Shelley has packed into a single image. By reading this image only as *défiguré*, de Man elides the fact that Shelley is obviously playing with the various rhetorics of Rousseau given to Shelley by English and European culture, and that he is signaling to his audience that he is doing so.

One of these rhetorics, that of Rousseau as Enlightenment dupe, allows us to read Rousseau's encounter with the "shape all light" one way, as an emblem of revolutionary France's seduction by the "light" of reason.[19] Waking into the state of epistemological uncertainty de Man describes, Rousseau encounters the "shape all light" which "tramples" the "embers" of his creating mind—the "fading coal" of "A Defence of Poetry"—just as Enlightenment reason extinguished all the other mental faculties of those supporting or participating in the French Revolution. Unaware of his predicament, Rousseau asks the shape who Rousseau is, just as the monstrous vanity of those in France allowed them to ask Enlightenment rationality to explain and systematize "man." The shape gives him a cup of nepenthe, the drug of forgetfulness—a fitting emblem for the new revolutionary faith that wants to create a new society, and erase all past traditions of government and law. The result is the erasure of the tracks upon Rousseau's mind, which as Duffy notes, parodies "the epistemological image at the base of eighteenth-

century rationalism . . . the Lockean notion of the mind as a tabula rasa. . . ."[20] The contradictory light imagery of the entire piece becomes a parody of the logic of Enlightenment thought, as does the cartoon-like sun—a "hackneyed self-image of the Enlightenment"—which begins the poem.[21]

But if the scene with the shape can be read as a reactionary explanation of Rousseau's and France's fall from grace, it would be dangerous to conflate this explanation with any "final" understanding of the poem. Indeed, I would suggest that the poem invites this explanation in order to place it under critical examination. To better understand what exactly is being examined, we must look more closely at the origins of Rousseau as a vain and perverse philosophe, and Enlightenment dupe. To do so means coming upon another body of monumentalized discourse the poem exhumes, that of the conservative English writer and thinker, Edmund Burke.

It is Burke who first combines the sensual egoist of the *Confessions* with the social scientist of the *Social Contract*, and gives Europe and England Rousseau as the perverse philosophe, "the great professor and founder of *the philosophy of vanity* in England."[22] From Burke comes the statue of Rousseau as disfigured thinker and writer, "who has carried the marks of a deranged understanding."[23] Also from Burke comes an aesthetic work that "inaugurated the Romantic critique of pictorialist poetics," and a political work that openly mocked "this new conquering empire of light and reason," "the light of which the gentlemen of France tell us they have got so abundant a share."[24] Shelley's disfigured Rousseau is thus not only a sign of the many Rousseaus of Shelley's time, but also a statue of the ideology of Edmund Burke.

Like Rousseau, this statue is also explicitly about monumentalized discourse. For Burke's major attack against Rousseau, his 1791 *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, directly responds to the Assembly's literal monumentalization of Rousseau in 1790: "To this man and this writer, as a pattern to authors and to Frenchmen, the foundries of Paris are now running for statues, with the kettles of their poor and the bells of their churches."[25] From the outset Burke's own discourse on Rousseau is beset by an awareness of canonization and the politics of that act.

There was also a revival of both Burke and Rousseau in the mid-teens, when Shelley began to write his major poetry.[26] It is not surprising that "The Triumph of Life," reflecting on how it formu-

lates the subject of its interrogation, should turn to Burke and Rousseau. These two not only represent the two normalizing discourses of the period, but were also intensely aware of their status as such.[27]

The poem best illustrates the dialectic between these two discourses in the way it handles its own libidinal energies. A paradigm for the sexual charge of the poem is Rousseau's description of himself "as one between desire and shame / Suspended" before the "shape all light" ("TL," 394). Those lines correctly describe the erotic play of Rousseau's *Confessions*, a work obsessed with the emotions surrounding secretive desires and their subsequent exposure. But Shelley's lines are also a Burkean representation of the French Revolution as an event shot through with a desire "lost to shame."[28] Thus, these lines caricature a fundamental difference between Rousseau and Burke, the former the poet of "desire," and the latter the moral voice of "shame." Likewise, the poem's crowd scenes are charged with a sensual ecstasy that then becomes a death frenzy of the species, where the dance surrounding the chariot's procession moves from the sensual "*fête*" that inaugurates society in Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, to the bloodthirsty mobs that gyrate through Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Just as in the *Essay* "the original festivals developed" and "feet skipped with joy," so too in Shelley "maidens & youths fling their wild arms in air / As their feet twinkle" ("TL," 149–50).[29] But the dancers then collapse from the intensity of their passion, and are replaced by "old men, and women foully disarrayed / [who] Shake their gray hair in the insulting wind" ("TL," 165–66)—gender-disturbing creatures who recall "the vilest of women" who surround the royal captives of Burke's *Reflections* with "horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies" (*RRF*, 85).

That famous passage from the *Reflections* is worth quoting more fully, for the other specific monument it unearths:

> The royal captives who followed the train were slowly moved along, amidst the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, and all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women. After they had been made to taste, drop by drop, more than the bitterness of death, in the slow torture of a journey of twelve miles, protracted to six hours, they were, under a guard, composed of those very soldiers who had thus conducted them through this famous *triumph*, lodged in one of the old palaces of Paris, now converted into a Bastille for kings.

> Is this a *triumph* to be consecrated at altars? to be commemorated with grateful thanksgiving? to be offered to the divine humanity with fervent prayer and enthusiastic ejaculation? (*RRF*, 85; my emphasis)[30]

Shelley's "triumph" is thus not only a classical allusion, but also part of the more immediate political vocabularies of his time. Furthermore, Burke's outcry is *itself* a direct response to the Old Jewry sermon by the ardent English supporter of the French Revolution, Dr. Richard Price, whom Burke quotes as exulting, "I am *thankful* . . . I have lived to see *Thirty Millions of People*, indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice. *Their King led in triumph and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects*" (*RRF*, 78). What is at stake for Burke is how anyone could view such a scene as a positive victory—a "triumph"—for European society and culture. He thus stresses the mistake of using the classical vocabulary of the triumph to describe a scene as bankrupt as the mob's humiliation of its royal captives in Paris. Somewhat paradoxically he also attacks that vocabulary as part of an inherently false and illegitimate spectacle. Thus Burke goes past the Romans to appeal to the "originators" of Western democracy, claiming that Athenian citizens would not allow the French triumph onto their stage: "No theatrical audience in Athens would bear what has been borne, in the midst of the real tragedy of this triumphal day" (*RRF*, 94). The only thing real about the "triumphal day" is its tragedy; as a simulacrum of liberty and progress, it fools no one. But *as* a simulacrum, the discourse of the triumph becomes the perfect emblem of the French Revolution, as an event with no real truth or legitimacy behind the guises it steals from other centuries.

Indeed, for Burke, if Price's vision is anything, it is merely a copy of the triumphal image that was used as part of England's own revolutionary discourse in 1648. Burke's point is to argue against Price's explicit connection of this vision to the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which was commonly held to begin England's own constitutional monarchy. For, as W. J. T. Mitchell notes, "Price, like many English liberals, saw the October Days as an augury of peaceful revolution, the reconciliation of Louis XVI with the National Assembly and the French people." Thus, Price's vision "typologically fuses the triumphal procession of King Louis and the people from Versailles to Paris with Christ's entry into Jerusalem and the entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land."[31] In contrast to this

vision, Burke cites from 1648 a description of the English revolutionary Rev. Hugh Peters, whom a witness sees "riding before the king *triumphing*" (*RRF*, 79). Here Charles I is the fallen monarch, a captive of a triumphant procession which leads not to the reconciliation between a king and his people, but to regicide. By imposing the 1648 usage of the triumph upon Price's vision, Burke not only erases Price's Christological allusion, but also repudiates the liberal English politics that goes with it.[32] Instead of a Louis XVI voluntarily leading his people in triumph toward a new democratic vision, Burke gives us a Louis XVI who is a captive of the triumph and his people, a victim of a procession that for Burke is nothing more than a bloodthirsty, monstrous mob.

Burke's *Reflections* shows the "triumph" to be both a highly politicized term and a highly unstable one, whose interpretation and cultural and political affiliation is up for grabs. It is this instability that "The Triumph of Life" exploits. Coming to terms with the triumph becomes another way in which the poem exhibits how it tries to formalize the subject of its interrogation. Burke's own interrogation of Price's triumph—"Is this a triumph to be consecrated at altars?"—shows that just as "Who is Rousseau?" asks more than just the identity of Rousseau, so too do the poem's questions about the triumph ask for more than just a description of the procession's form.

When Burke attacks Price, he also ignores another reason why the revolutionaries used the triumph as a Roman allusion—because they wanted to associate their politics with a Roman republicanism of the past. But this revolutionary use of the triumph is itself an inversion, for the Roman triumphs were not so much a sign of a republican Rome as a display of foreign chieftains conquered by an imperial Rome. Shelley appears to reverse his triumph back to this imperial form:

> [I] saw like clouds upon the thunder blast
>
> The million with fierce song and manic dance
> Ranging around; such seemed the jubilee
> As when to greet some conqueror's advance
>
> Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea
> From senatehouse & prison & theatre
> When Freedom left those who upon the free

Had bound a yoke which soon they stooped to bear.
Nor wanted here the true similitude
Of a triumphal pageant, for where'er
The chariot rolled a captive multitude
Was driven.

("TL," 109–20)

Yet Shelley's "Imperial Rome" contains *both* totalitarian and liberational energies. Its crowds come out to meet "some conqueror's advance," ostensibly a Roman military leader returning home with the fruits of his victories. Read this way, both crowd and conqueror are part of the same imperial celebration. But those who "advance" in a Roman triumph are also the prisoners of the procession; the conqueror then becomes, like Burke's version of Price's Louis XVI and Peters's Charles I, the fallen despot, one of those "who upon the free / Had bound a yoke which soon they stooped to bear." This "advance" is also marked by a great sense of release within Rome itself, where those from "prison" are not only freed, but become part of a "living sea" with those from the "senatehouse" and "theatre." The wild and frantic "jublilee" around the triumph becomes not only a totalitarian mob, but also a demonstration, a "riot" of democratic and populist aspirations. The captives of the triumph, moreover, are the great leaders and personages of history whom Rousseau and Shelley's poet review; they are signs of a certain way to tell history, to narrate a population's collective story through the individual careers of a handful of canonized figures. As those bound to a yoke they had freely given others, they represent a history that is intrinsically totalitarian; in contrast, those "million with fierce song and manic dance" demonstrate the artifice of that history, and the possibility of moving beyond that narrative to a collective destiny. But that possibility turns in upon and extinguishes itself, when, through its Rousseauist and Burkean discourses, the poem transforms its libidinal dance into a nightmarish scene of mutilation and decay.[33] Rousseau's own situation emphasizes this historical plight: standing apart from those chained to the chariot, Rousseau's personage suggests the creation of a new history after 1789, even "if it be world of agony" ("TL," 295). But borne into the madness of the crowd, falling to the wayside exhausted and deformed, Rousseau becomes a monument to the crowd's failure to escape the monumentalized history of the chariot's captives, and to create, with a vocabulary that goes beyond that monumentalized history, an as yet unspoken and unformed history of its own.

From where could such a vocabulary come? Shelley also problematizes that question, by ironically insisting upon the "true similitude" of his own triumph, thereby foregrounding what Burke claims about Price, that the triumph is itself a simulacrum used to describe something that it is not. Shelley's poet's "Vision" must image its historical plight *through* a monument, a Roman triumph that divides its procession between conquered historical personages and a dancing population beyond those personages' history. To posit or imagine something new besides this history necessarily means a reliance upon something old, the dancing crowd around a Roman triumph. The "millions" dancing around the chariot with their libidinal dream are then monuments in their own right, linguistic constructions open to deconstruction—to the de Manian disfigurement "Shelley Disfigured" so ably demonstrates.

To come to grips with this knowledge is not only an imperative of deconstruction's "exemplary rigor," for the consequences of disavowing this knowledge are not only linguistic, but political.[34] The fate of the poem's triumph dramatizes what happens when a revolutionary discourse forgets its own rhetoricity. For the French revolutionary triumph of both Price and Burke transforms itself in Shelley's own historical moment. The triumph crowns itself, as did Napoleon, with the "moving arch of victory" ("TL," 439) that in 1822 could not help but recall the *Arc de Triomphe* begun by Napoleon in 1806, the literal monument and sign of an imperial Napoleonic discourse that took over from the French Revolution such terms as "liberation," "the State" and "the people" to describe French hegemony over Europe from 1800 to 1814.[35]

We are now able to read Rousseau's encounter with the "shape all light" once more. Rousseau wakes into the state of radical uncertainty which de Man calls "forgetting." But as we saw in "Shelley Disfigured," the very nature of that state means an absence of permanent erasure. History in all its aporetic force comes back to Rousseau as the "shape all light" and the drug nepenthe. Rousseau drinks the drug and forgets to forget, negating the negation obstructing his access to a historical consciousness. But "to forget to forget" is a highly violent form of historical awareness; the nepenthe imposes upon Rousseau what has surpassed him and the French Revolution, an imperial discourse "as if from some dread war / Triumphantly returning" ("TL," 436–37). This discourse has itself forgotten its own rhetoricity, what would confute the discourse's own certainty in applying the triumph of the French

Revolution to the European ambitions of Napoleon. Shelley calls the image of this discourse a "new Vision," which acknowledges the discourse's imposition upon Rousseau, while mocking its dependence upon its "vehicle," the triumph. The catalogue of horrors that ends Shelley's fragment is the devastation and oppression of Europe and England brought on by the post-revolutionary adventurism of Napoleonic France, and the repressive measures of its enemies. But Shelley's poem has not forgotten its own hard lesson about disfigurement and erasure: the shadowy creatures "numerous as the dead leaves blown" ("TL," 528), and shot through with the cold light of the chariot, stress the disfiguring textual forms this catalogue of recent history must take.

"The Triumph of Life" is thus post-Enlightenment *and* post-Napoleonic. Or more precisely, it tries to write itself past Napoleon by going back and examining all the political and linguistic lessons of monuments and discourses that lead up to his fallen figure chained to the chariot. The question the poem wants to ask but cannot has as its subject something like the experience of Europe and England from the deformed Rousseau to the fallen Napoleon. That the poem cannot interrogate or form this subject except through constant substitutions of different statuary is the lesson the poem constructs out of that always receding experience.[36] Constructed in a deconstructive sense, that lesson becomes the answer de Man gives at the end of "The Resistance to Theory": "What remains impossible to decide is whether this flourishing [of theory] is a triumph or a fall."[37] What remains impossible for "The Triumph of Life" to resolve is the final form of its narration; what remains—what, indeed, is poeticized—is the limit of its historical and critical consciousness.

This lesson of uncertainty is what projects this unfinished poem past Napoleon, even as it problematizes the idea of surpassing the certainty embedded in revolutionary discourse up to and including Napoleon. By ignoring its status as a monumentalized discourse, the "arch of victory" paradoxically becomes a captive to itself, another blind historical figure. It forgets that it is, as de Man says elsewhere, one of those "texts [which] masquerade in the guise of wars and revolutions."[38] The most notable writer to take up this issue will be Karl Marx, whose 1851 *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* will provide a critique of revolution up to its time that will sound very familiar to readers of "The Triumph of Life" *and* Burke:

> And just when [the living] seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and to borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language. Thus Luther donned the mask of the Apostle Paul, the Revolution of 1789 to 1814 draped itself alternately as the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire . . .[39]

Marx's project was, of course, to distinguish as radically as possible the discontinuity between the identities of bourgeois and proletarian revolutions. That this project still occupies a prominent position as a *critical problem* in leftist theoretical discourse is demonstrated in the recent statement by the post-Marxist Chantal Mouffe, that "we are undoubtedly living through the crisis of the Jacobin imaginary, which has, in diverse ways, characterized the revolutionary politics of the last two hundred years."[40] I would thus place "The Triumph of Life" and *its* deconstructive critique of revolutionary—and imperial—identity within a certain tradition also spanning Marx and Mouffe, that is the recognition, thinking through, and dramatization of this "crisis of the Jacobin imaginary."

This is the tradition that de Man, through his own reception of Shelley, inherits, and which "Shelley Disfigured" *and* leftist critics of de Man suppress. But if "Shelley Disfigured" does suppress the sociohistoric context of "The Triumph of Life," its own violent recognition of the disfiguring inevitability of monuments calls for a dialectical engagement with the object it reads, and thus for the erasure—the "forgetting"—of that suppression. If, in other words, theorists of the left are still intent upon a politics that engages with the contingencies of history, de Man's own texts of nepenthe, his aporetic invocations of the problem of history, will be read. This is the comment, I would suggest, that we can make out of "The Triumph of Life," that "The Triumph of Life" makes for what is called deconstruction's political future.

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NOTES

[1] Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in Harold Bloom et al., *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1979), 39–73; all further references to this work, abbreviated "SD," will appear in the text.

For an assertion of the importance of "Shelley Disfigured" for understanding de Man's relation to history, see Jacques Derrida, "Like the Sound of the Sea Deep Within a Shell: Paul de Man's War," in *Responses: On Paul de Man's Wartime*

Journalism, ed. Werner Hamacher, Neil Hertz, and Thomas Keenan (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1989), 152.

[2] All quotations from "The Triumph of Life" are from the critical edition by Donald H. Reiman, *Shelley's "The Triumph of Life," A Critical Study* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965). Further references to this work, abbreviated "TL," will be to line number and appear in the text. For a discussion of the poem's complex textual history, see Reiman, 119–28.

[3] See Harold Bloom, *Shelley's Mythmaking* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), 220–75; and Kenneth Neill Cameron, *Shelley, The Golden Years* (Boston: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), 472–73.

[4] The archetypical example of this approach is Harold Bloom's analysis of the poem in *Shelley's Mythmaking* (note 3), 220–75. With a vigor that anticipates his later critical method, he wrestles with past readers of Shelley over many of the specific lines of the poem, recovering and reconstructing the lines' meaning through a close reading that is critical, interpretive, and emendatory. Bloom constructs what he believes to be the complete poem of which "The Triumph of Life" is a fragment: a poem that is a vision, where history is inscribed in "mythopoeia" (8), and where the completed poem also completes another reconstructed structure, a whole that includes most of Shelley's major works, where one can read a progression of Shelley's mythopoeia toward the only conclusion possible, the defeat of myth in "The Triumph of Life."

Bloom is one of two critics de Man mentions ("SD," 70 n. 3) to exemplify critical methods that assume the fragmentary nature of Shelley's work must be answered. Opposed to Bloom, whom de Man typifies as believing the poem would have ended pessimistically as antimyth, is M. H. Abrams's optimistic evaluation of the poem in his *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1971), 441.

[5] De Man treats this trope most fully in his piece on Wordsworth's *Essay upon Epitaphs*, "Autobiography as De-Facement." See de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984), 67–81. Also see Cynthia Chase's "Giving Face to a Name: Paul de Man's Figures," in *Decomposing Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986), 82–112.

[6] I take these and the following phrases of "The Triumph of Life" from the passages of the poem (352–57; 394–411) that de Man quotes in his argument about Rousseau ("SD," 45, 54).

[7] It is precisely this performative power of language that Cynthia Chase argues de Man is diagnosing as the condition "of the possibility of Nazism" in his essay, "Aesthetic Formalization: Kleist's 'Über das Marionettentheater.' " See Chase, "Trappings of an Education toward What We Do Not Yet Have," in Hamacher, Hertz, and Keenan (note 1), 43–79. For a more reserved commentary on the politics of that same essay by de Man, see Dominick LaCapra, *Soundings in Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1989), 131.

[8] Jerome Christensen, " 'Like a Guilty Thing Surprised': Deconstruction, Coleridge, and the Apostasy of Criticism," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1986): 771.

[9] While it is not at all clear that the shape does sink, see Cameron (note 3), 470, for a reading that supports de Man's contention that the "arch of victory" is the rainbow.

[10] Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983), 13.

[11] Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1983), 136.

[12] De Man writes: "The history of Rousseau interpretation is particularly rich in this respect, both in the diversity of the tactics employed to make him say something different from what he said, and in the convergence of these misreadings toward a

definite configuration of meanings. It is as if the conspiracy that Rousseau's paranoia imagined during his lifetime came into being after his death, uniting friend and foe alike in a concerted effort to misrepresent his thought" ("The Rhetoric of Blindness" [note 11], 112).

[13] Peter France, *Rousseau: Confessions* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 17.

[14] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker* trans. Charles E. Butterworth (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1979), 4–5, 7.

[15] Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919).

[16] Edward Duffy, *Rousseau in England: The Context for Shelley's Critique of the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1979), 33.

[17] James K. Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984), 98–104. See also Duffy (note 16), 34–35.

[18] Duffy, 37–53.

[19] This reading is largely indebted to Duffy's *Rousseau in England*, which connects the light of Enlightenment reason with the light imagery of "The Triumph of Life" (106–51). Duffy, however, sees the "shape all light" as a positive force, a symbol of poetic imagination and Keatsian negative capability (128), an "obscure tenour" ("TL," 432) that opposes Rousseau's wrongheaded desire for Enlightenment reason and clarity, "something more definite and precise" (131).

[20] Duffy, 130.

[21] Duffy, 125.

[22] Edmund Burke, *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, in *The Works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke*, vol. 4 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1889), 26.

[23] Burke, *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (note 22), 24.

[24] W. J. T. Mitchell, "Visible Language: Blake's Wond'rous Art of Writing," in *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Morris Eaves and Michael Fischer (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1986), 50; and Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1973), 90, 265. All further references to *Reflections*, abbreviated *RRF*, will be included in the text.

[25] Burke, *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, 25.

[26] For Rousseau, see Duffy, 86. The most famous example of the Burke revival, which only became known years later, was Wordsworth's inclusion and homage to Burke in the 1820 version of *The Prelude*.

[27] David Cameron suggests that "both Rousseau and Burke, approached and interpreted in the light of 1789, and what followed, have become in some degree symbols, and have entered what might be called the 'mythology' of European history. . . . And as a rule the admirers and critics of Burke and Rousseau, though they agree in little else, are of one mind when it comes to locating the position of each in respect of the revolution. Alfred Cobban writes of Rousseau that 'his name was inevitably associated with the revolution, both with the popular disorders in which it began, and the excess of governmental authority in which it ended. For both these developments in turn he has been made chiefly responsible.' Edmund Burke is viewed by friends and foes alike as the most eloquent spokesman of the counter-revolution, and he predicted and opposed both the phases Cobban describes above" (*The Social Thought of Rousseau and Burke: A Comparative Study* [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973], 165). Cameron quotes Alfred Cobban from his *Rousseau and the Modern State*, revised ed. (New York: George Allen and Unwin, 1964), 20.

[28] The French Assembly acts, Burke writes, "amidst the tumultuous cries of a mixed mob of ferocious men, and of women lost to shame" (*RRF*, 81).

[29] As Rousseau writes, "There too, the original festivals developed. Feet skipped with joy, earnest gestures no longer sufficed, being accompanied by an impassioned voice; pleasure and desire mingled and were felt together" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, in *On the Origin of Language*, trans. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode [New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966], 45).

[30] Perhaps Burke's outcry is also against the installation of Rousseau in the Pantheon of the Revolution's heroes; the procession toward the Pantheon was a literal triumph that bore Rousseau's ashes. See the cover illustration of Chandler's *Wordsworth's Second Nature* (note 17), *The Apotheosis of J. J. Rousseau and His Conveyance to the Pantheon (October 11, 1794)*, from the *l'Ancien Moniteur, 1794*.

[31] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), 144.

[32] Burke also exposes the mobility—and thus perhaps the instability—of his own iconoclastic vocabulary by calling Rev. Peters a Catholic idolater, that is, the "Pontiff" (*RRF*, 79).

[33] See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981), 281–300, for one treatment of libidinal Utopian vision and collective history.

[34] Jonathan Arac, *Critical Genealogies: Historical Situations for Postmodern Literary Studies* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1987), 110. For a discussion of deconstruction's investment in the concept of "rigor," see 97–110.

[35] The *Arc de Triomphe* was begun in 1806, but was not completed till 1835. But another arch was built during Napoleon's reign, celebrating Austerlitz, at the Tuileries. (Napoleon originally wanted to build four triumphal arches in Paris, celebrating Marengo, Austerlitz, peace and religion.) The arches were also part of a larger imperial discourse that flourished during Napoleon's reign, the Empire style of architecture that changed Paris. See Vincent Cronin, *Napoleon Bonaparte: An Intimate Biography* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1972), 302–18. For a discussion of the continuation of the rhetoric of the French Revolution in French and Western notions of politics and education, see Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: The Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1979), 31–36.

[36] This constant substitution of statuary parallels Jerrold E. Hogle's notion of "transference" in his *Shelley's Process: Radical Transference and the Development of His Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988). For Hogle, however, Shelley's "transference"—his "ceaseless transition between elements of thought" (vii)—is a liberating, politically progressive force, whereas what I am stressing here is how the substitution of statuary in "The Triumph of Life" functions as a critique of the liberation narrative with which Shelley's poem is trying to coincide. Hogle's specific reading of "The Triumph of Life," moreover, is concerned with the poem's classical and literary allusions, rather than the political ones I identify. See Hogle, 3–27, 319–42.

[37] Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory," in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: The Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1986), 20.

[38] Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," in *Blindness and Insight* (note 11), 85.

[39] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978), 595.

[40] Chantal Mouffe, "Radical Democracy: Modern or Postmodern?" in *Universal Abandon?: The Politics of Postmodernism*, ed. Andrew Ross (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1988), 31.